

Determining the Appropriate Reading Medium

The determination of the most appropriate reading medium for a student with a visual impairment is often a complex but critical decision. This decision should be based on individual needs and ongoing assessment by a credentialed teacher of the visually impaired. The assessment process should include recommendations from a multidisciplinary team whose members may include the following: teacher of the visually impaired, parents, eye specialist, student, classroom teacher, and other staff serving the student.

Reading efficiency includes the ability to read comfortably (for an extended period of time) at a rate consistent with one's learning needs and skills necessary for current and future environments (e.g., postsecondary education, workplace, community, and so forth). The most appropriate reading medium is that which is the most efficient in terms of comprehension, speed, and stamina and is commensurate with the student's ability and interest. For functionally blind students who have the ability to read, it is necessary to determine the appropriate reading medium as well as to evaluate alternative learning media that may enable or enhance students' access to instruction and learning. Exclusive use of braille is not recommended if other media are determined to be appropriate and efficient. On the other hand, provision of other media does not preclude braille use or instruction.

The process of assessing and determining the appropriate reading medium, when warranted, is an integral part of the process of the functional vision assessment completed by the teacher of the visually impaired (see Appendix B, "Assessing Vision/Low Vision"). The functional vision assessment is one criterion to be used in determining the appropriate reading medium or media for a student. (See Appendix F, "Legal Requirements.")

Guidelines to Determine the Appropriate Reading Medium

Listed as follows are guidelines to help in determining the appropriate reading medium for a student with a visual impairment:

1. An examination by an eye specialist with expertise in low vision is important in order to determine the

student's ability to benefit from optical low vision aids.

2. Flexibility across learning tasks and environments should always be encouraged for the student with a visual impairment. Some students may benefit from instruction in both braille and print. A survey of the types of instructional tasks, curricular areas, and educational media the student is required to use will determine the most efficient medium for each task. A primary reading medium should be selected and used for the majority of educational tasks. Alternative learning media (e.g., tape, reader, aural technology, or tactual representation) are recommended for occasions when it is necessary to alleviate fatigue experienced when the primary reading medium is being used for an extended period of time.
3. Use of taped material, while an important resource and alternative learning medium, should not be relied on to the exclusion of providing access in hard copy for students who read (print or braille or both). Even the most efficient auditory learners need to refer to the hard copy text to understand formatting, answer questions, and so forth. Verbal descriptions alone are inadequate to convey meaning in maps, diagrams, charts, and drawings.
4. Current technology can enable or enhance access to both braille and print. Specialized equipment does not supplant the need for braille or print literacy or the student's need to receive hard copies of instructional materials.
5. Many interrelated factors (e.g., visual, social/emotional, or learning) may need to be considered in addition to the selection of the most appropriate reading medium when a student is having difficulty with learning and achievement. Difficulty in reading or writing or both may be more related to the inability of a student to *understand* what he or she sees rather than to his or her ability to *access* the information in either braille or print. Multidisciplinary assessment is crucial to determine the specific factors related to difficulties in learning and achievement.

Factors to Consider in Determining the Reading Medium

Academic performance and selection of the most appropriate reading and writing medium are influenced by many factors. **No single factor** in isolation should be

used in determining the most appropriate medium. This decision has significant implications, and decisions should be made through an ongoing evaluation process as well as through consideration of visual, learning, and social/emotional variables.

Vision-Related Factors

1. *Etiology and Prognosis*—The nature and extent of the student's vision loss determined on the basis of a current examination by an eye specialist is an important consideration. Certain unstable eye conditions (e.g., retinitis pigmentosa, congenital glaucoma, retinal detachment, and retinoblastoma) may progress to a level where print reading is slow and difficult. It is important to note that the presence of an unstable eye condition does not automatically require braille instruction.
2. *Visual Acuity*—A student's distance and near acuity, with and without corrective lenses or low vision aids, is usually a place to start for further evaluation of the appropriate reading medium.
3. *Visual Field*—The visual field is the amount of letters, characters, or shapes that can be seen at one time. The field may be so limited (e.g., no more than three letters, even with magnification) that the student reads at an extremely slow rate. Although the student may be able to read labels or signs, this level of reading may not be sufficient for sustained and/or extensive reading as required in school and workplace settings.
4. *Focal Distance*—Focal distance as it applies to this discussion is the distance between the student's eyes and the reading or writing material. The focal distance will vary with print size. Low vision students often require less than standard reading and writing distances (14 to 16 inches). The closer the student is to the reading and/or writing material, the more physically challenging the task may become. For example, unnatural body positions, head tilting, difficulty maintaining focus, and loss of field may make reading or writing slow and tedious.
5. *Type Size Required*—The required type size is the smallest print size that the student can read efficiently and accurately, *even with optical aids*. Large-print materials are usually published in the 18 to 22 point range; materials beyond 24 points are not readily available.
6. *Visual Stamina*—This is the amount of time a student (with correction) can sustain a reading or writing activity before making significant errors or

experiencing physical signs of fatigue and discomfort. Signs of fatigue or discomfort may include headaches, watery eyes, neck and shoulder strain, and other signs of stress. Although numerous variables (e.g., lighting conditions, motivation, or time of day) will affect the visual stamina of a student, the student should be able to work efficiently and comfortably for the entire academic day and still be able to enjoy board games, comic books, and so forth.

Learning-Related Factors

7. *Reading Rate*—Just as a student's reading vocabulary and comprehension should increase, so too should there be measurable growth in a student's reading rate. If the student's reading rate (with correction and print modification) is considerably slower than that of his or her sighted peers, and apparently is the result of a vision impairment rather than of a visual perceptual/visual motor dysfunction problem, the process of determining the appropriate reading medium should be initiated.
8. *Comprehension*—The student's reading comprehension should be commensurate with that of his or her sighted peers. Consideration must be given to the student's abilities and length of instruction in the medium. If the student spends an inordinate amount of physical energy trying to see the material, that problem will interfere with the student's ability to comprehend at the expected level.
9. *Portability of Learning Media*—This is the student's ability to transfer reading and writing skills across a variety of physical environments. The student should not be solely dependent on nonportable technological equipment and devices for reading or writing or both. In addition, a student who cannot read his or her own handwriting with or without optical aids will not be able to retrieve information (e.g., taking notes, directions, or telephone numbers).
10. *Preferred Mode of Functioning*—It is important to consider whether the student is primarily a visual, tactual, or auditory learner. Observation of the student in a variety of settings and activities will help determine which sensory modality the student prefers.
11. *General Learning Abilities*—It is important to consider the student's overall present levels of functioning in areas such as intellectual ability, academic achievement, motor ability, communica-

tion skills, and so forth, as well as the student's preferred learning modality. These considerations give relevant information about the student, which is important when the student receives instruction in reading and writing.

12. *Special Considerations for Students with Visual Impairments and Other Disabilities*—It is important to keep in perspective the presence of other known or suspected sensory, physical, or cognitive disabilities. The presence of an apparent learning disability, developmental delay, or orthopedic impairment, for example, may interfere with the student's ability to learn and demonstrate adequate skills or progress. A multidisciplinary team should consider the use of braille or print in a modified or an adapted format that enables and promotes, to the maximum extent possible, the student's acquisition of information and functional communication skills.

Social/Emotional-Related Factors

13. *Attitude and Motivation*—Acceptance of visual loss and the need to use different educational media can be stressful for students. The student with a visual impairment and his or her family may be very sensitive to using media in an adapted format and may need help to adjust. A student must have the desire and motivation to use the adapted medium for learning and achievement.
14. *Parents and Community*—It is important that the student's family and community understand and value the learning medium selected. To ensure this acceptance, the family should be involved in the ongoing assessment and decision-making process.

Determining the Appropriate Reading Medium: The Preschool Child

The assessment and determination of the appropriate reading medium for a preschool child three to five years old require careful observation and interpretation of apparent vision-related strengths and limitations. There is a considerable amount of preacademic information, skills, and concepts which preschoolers need to learn. Preschoolers who have low vision may have difficulty in learning this information for three major reasons: first, they may not yet have had the opportunity; second, they may not have been shown how to use their vision effectively and efficiently; and third, they may be using sensory channels other than vision or vision alone to learn because of the nature and extent of their visual

impairment. It is important to separate the apparent difficulties that, most likely, may result from the inability to see from the apparent difficulties that may reflect initial lack of exposure and experience in use of vision.

Preschoolers cannot be assessed through the use of the same techniques and materials that would be used with students who have learned their letters or have started reading. However, it is possible to use age-appropriate activities and materials to get an idea of whether print or braille or both will be the appropriate reading medium. For some children it may be clear (on the basis of a child's medical information and results from assessed visual functioning) whether print or braille will be the appropriate reading medium. For other children, initially, it may be necessary to simultaneously develop visual and tactual prereading skills to maximize participation and access to learning; then as a child's skills emerge, an appropriate and/or primary reading medium can be more clearly determined.

Selected References

- Conroy, M. AB 2445, Chapter 998, Statutes of 1994, known as the "Braille Bill." (See Appendix F, "Legal Requirements.")
- Efron, J. "Determining Appropriate Reading Medium," Edsp 467, California State University, Los Angeles. January 26, 1993. (Lecture Notes).
- Koenig, A. J., and M. C. Holbrook. "Determining the Reading Medium for Visually Impaired Students Via Diagnostic Teaching," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, Vol. 85, No. 2, (1991), 61–68.
- Mangold, S. S., and P. N. Mangold. "Selecting the Most Appropriate Primary Learning Medium for Students with Functional Vision," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, Vol. 83, No. 6, (1989), 294–96.
- Print and Braille Literacy: Selecting Appropriate Learning Media*. Edited by H. Caton. Louisville, Ky.: American Printing House for the Blind, 1991.

Checklist for Determining the Appropriate Reading Medium

Summary Sheet for Visually Impaired Students

Many factors must be evaluated when the appropriate reading medium (print, braille, or a combination of both) is being determined for students with visual impairments that adversely affect educational performance. This checklist is intended for use with preschool or school-age students.

Date: _____ Student's name: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____ School/Placement: _____

Name of teacher of the visually impaired: _____

Nature/Extent of Visual Impairment

Diagnosis: _____

Prognosis: Stable: _____ Deteriorating: _____ Fluctuating: _____

Implications: _____

Acuity: Near : _____ Distance: _____

Visual fields: _____

Other information: _____

Functional Vision Assessment Date completed: _____

Additional Disabilities Which May Interfere with Ability to Read

Describe: _____

Implication(s): _____

Vision-Related Factors

Orients to Material (Most frequent behavior with picture, book, object, or toy)

Visually: _____ Tactually: _____ Observation(s): _____

Focal Distance (Eyes to text)

2 inches or less: _____ Item(s): _____ 3 to 4 inches: _____ Item(s): _____

4 to 6 inches: _____ Item(s): _____ More than 6 inches: _____ Item(s): _____

Other: _____

Visual Attention: Objects, Pictured Items, or Shapes (Note the *item*, *size*, and the amount of *time* the student's interest was sustained.)

Type Size Required (Enables relative ease and speed)

Regular print (12 point and below): _____ 14 to 16 point (slight "boost"): _____ 18 to 20 point: _____

20 to 24 point: _____ Above 24 point (Indicate size.): _____ Regular and large print: _____

Large print only: _____ Large print with magnification aid: _____

Comments: _____

Visual Stamina: Print (Sustained viewing of appropriate type size without fatigue or discomfort)

Under 15 minutes: _____ Size: _____ 20 to 30 minutes: _____ Size: _____

40 to 50 minutes or more: _____ Size: _____

Single-spaced copy: _____ Widely spaced lines: _____ Comment: _____

Reading-Related Factors**Reading Rate and Comprehension** (Works at seeing text instead of understanding what is seen)

Reads at a rate compatible with grade-level peers (Approximately one-third slower): _____

Reads slowly with understanding: _____ Reads slowly without understanding: _____

Completes task in reasonable time: _____ Routinely requires more time (How much?): _____

Observation(s): _____

Portability (Specialized reading material or equipment or both are easily shifted to different settings.)

Uses portable magnification devices: _____ Uses only CCTV: _____

Writing or Drawing

Attends to own drawing: Color used: _____ Utensil used: _____

Reads own writing: If dark enough: _____ With portable aid: _____ Not at all: _____

Preferred position/posture: _____

Preferred Mode of Functioning (Typically orients to or sustains attention to)

Visual: _____ Tactual: _____ Auditory: _____ Combined (name): _____

Observation(s): _____

Recommendations for Appropriate Reading Medium or Media**Primary Reading Medium Recommended** (To be used exclusively or most frequently)

Braille: _____ Print (large print): _____ All subjects: _____

Specify: _____

Secondary Reading Medium Recommended (Appropriate on occasion)

Braille: _____ Large print: _____ Regular print: _____

Specify which subjects or activities and time of day: _____

Specialized Interventions/Compensations Necessary for Instruction in Primary or Secondary Reading Medium or Both

Special format materials required: _____

Special instructional methods or modifications or both: _____

Specialized materials or equipment or both: _____

Additional Comments: __________

California School for the Blind

This appendix contains information about the California School for the Blind in Fremont, including the program's purpose, referral and admissions procedures, residential policy, and assessment program.

Purpose of the Program

The California School for the Blind is a state-funded and state-operated residential school that provides comprehensive educational services to California students who are visually impaired, deaf-blind, and visually impaired/multihandicapped from infancy through age twenty-one. Among these educational services are assistance with communication skills; cognition skills; daily living skills; literacy skills, including braille reading and writing; use of assistive technology; prevocational/vocational education; orientation and mobility; motor development; and auditory, visual, and tactual training. These services are provided through partnerships with families, communities, local school districts, and other relevant agencies in order to empower students to lead vocationally, personally, and socially satisfying, productive lives and to attain their highest level of independence.

Guidelines for Enrollment

The following guidelines for enrollment define the referral process and criteria for referral of students to the California School for the Blind.

Referral Process

Priority for admission to the California School for the Blind (CSB) will be given to students residing in sparsely populated regions of the state. Enrollment of a student will occur when it has been demonstrated that the CSB is the most appropriate educational placement among the continuum of options.

A potential student for the CSB must be referred by the individualized education program team of the school district where the student resides. A referral packet must be completed. On receipt of the referral, the staff at the CSB will request all records of the referred student. An admissions committee will review the records and

inform the superintendent of the CSB that an appropriate program is available or will endeavor to provide technical assistance and consultation if an appropriate program is not available.

Criteria for Referral

A student referred to the CSB shall meet the criterion that the primary disabling condition is a significant visual impairment (see Appendix F). The kinds of visual impairments are defined as follows:

- *Visual impairment including blindness* means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness (34 *Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]* Part 300, Sec. 300.7(b)(13)).
- *Deaf-blindness* means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness (34 *CFR* Part 300, Sec. 300.7(b)(2)).
- *Multiple disabilities* means concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation—blindness, mental retardation—orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational problems that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness (34 *CFR* Part 300, Sec. 300.7(b)(6)). To qualify as a visually impaired student with multiple disabilities, a child must have a visual impairment as one of the disabling conditions.

A student's eligibility for admission to the CSB shall be determined when the following general requirements have been met:

- The parents or legal guardians are determined to be residents of California.
- The applicant student is of appropriate age for admission to the CSB.
- The local educational agency has a current individualized education program (IEP) that lists the student's placement, educational needs, and related

services requirements, as well as the assessment reports (including medical) on which the individualized educational program is based.

- The student's needs cannot be met locally.
- The local IEP team and staff of the CSB have determined this school to be the appropriate placement for the student.

Residential Policy

The residential program is designed for students whose place of residence is outside of the day student area as defined in the following statement: Students residing in school districts that provide daily transportation to and from California schools for the deaf and blind (as mandated by *Education Code* sections 59030 and 59124) shall be day students, except that travel between the time of pickup to drop-off at the state special school shall not exceed 60 minutes.

The residential program provides an expanded environment to promote students' independence through enhancing daily living skills, social skills, and participation in recreation and leisure.

Assessment Program

In addition to providing educational and residential services, the CSB offers diagnostic evaluation and outreach services to students with visual impairments who are enrolled in public and private schools throughout California and who are expected to continue in those settings. This assessment program helps local educators and parents to better understand students' needs so that the most effective educational program can be designed.

CSB assessment program staff members are available to provide direct student assessment services, train local teams in the assessment of visually impaired students, work with educators and parents to modify curriculum and instruction, disseminate information regarding vision loss and the implications of vision loss for the school program, and provide training for educational staff and parents. Services may be provided at the CSB or in the LEA.

Specialized Books, Materials, and Equipment

This appendix identifies sources of funding for specialized books, materials, and equipment. Information on the American Printing House for the Blind Federal Quota Program is also provided. Funding provisions for all special education programs are found in Part 30, Chapter 7, of the *Education Code*, commencing with *Education Code* Section 56700.

Funding for Specialized Books, Materials, and Equipment

State funding is available to purchase and coordinate the use of specialized equipment and materials for pupils with low incidence disabilities. Yearly entitlements are computed and allocated on a per capita basis by using the December unduplicated pupil counts of SELPAs for students in the following categories: hard of hearing, deaf, visually impaired, orthopedically impaired, and deaf-blind. This entitlement is allocated at the SELPA level. Each responsible local agency of a SELPA needs to ensure that appropriate materials and equipment are purchased, as required under the individualized education program, coordinated, and reassigned as necessary. (See Appendix F for legal requirements and Appendix G for sources of technical assistance from the California Department of Education.)

Another source of funding for materials and equipment for legally blind students is the American Printing House for the Blind Federal Quota Program, administered by the Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology (CSMT), a unit of the California Department of Education. The activities of CSMT are described in the next section of this appendix.

Before purchasing materials and equipment, one should check with CSMT to see whether this equipment is available from another source. Program planners may also wish to contact CSMT before purchasing new equipment and materials to ascertain their usefulness and cost effectiveness.

Local service clubs and other community groups may help to provide funds for equipment and materials when no other funding source is available.

Sources of Specialized Books, Materials, and Equipment

Sources of specialized books, materials, and equipment discussed in this section are the Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology (CSMT), key agencies for specialized materials, and key agencies for technology. A description of the services offered is provided as well.

Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology

The California Department of Education's Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology (CSMT) is a unit within the State Special Schools and Services Division of the Specialized Programs Branch. Major functions and services of the CSMT discussed in this section are the provision of state-adopted elementary school textbooks, computer searches, and the Blind Teachers Readers Fund.

State-adopted elementary school textbooks. The State Board of Education is required to provide state-adopted textbooks in braille and large print to pupils enrolled in elementary schools whose visual impairment makes the use of such books necessary (see *Education Code* sections 60240, 60312, and 60313). Students with visual impairments who are entitled to attend public elementary schools of the district, but who attend a school other than a public school, may also borrow books in braille and large print from CSMT through their school administrators. Catalogs and forms are available at the CSMT.

Titles produced in braille, large print, and aural media are produced and distributed through:

Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology
California Department of Education
560 J Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-5103
FAX: (916) 323-9732

At the end of the school year, current adoptions in braille or large print that will not be used must be returned by mail to:

CSMT Textbook Warehouse
401 N. Third Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-7735

Books that have become obsolete during the year may be retained, shared with other education agencies, or disposed of through regular procedures. CSMT should be notified of titles that are to be destroyed.

Computer searches. The CSMT uses the American Printing House (APH) for the Blind's CARL ET AL computer network to help teachers and parents locate books in braille and in large print and other specialized media. Those wishing to have the CSMT search the APH database may telephone, write, or fax the title, publisher's name, copyright date, and ISBN.

To assist parents, consumers, and teachers in their search for assistive devices and adaptive computer technologies, the CSMT uses the Trace R&D Center's CD-ROM Hyper-AbleData database. This valuable tool provides descriptions of assistive devices on the market, the cost of each, their manufacturers' names, and, many times, a picture of the device.

Blind Teachers Readers Fund. The CSMT administers California's Blind Teachers Readers Fund. This program helps districts pay for reading services required by certificated classroom teachers.

Key Agencies for Specialized Materials

Agencies that have an extensive role in providing specialized materials for students who are visually impaired are listed as follows:

American Printing House for the Blind
1839 Frankfort Avenue
Louisville, KY 40206
(800) 223-1839
FAX: (502) 895-1509

California Department of Education
Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology
560 J Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-5103
FAX: (916) 323-9732
TDD: (916) 323-2202

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20542
(202) 707-5100
(800) 952-5666

Braille Institute
741 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 660-3880
(800) 252-9486

Braille and Talking Book Library
 California State Library
 900 N Street
 Sacramento, CA 95814
 (916) 654-0640
 (800) 952-5666

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, Inc. (RFB&D)
 20 Roszel Road
 Princeton, NJ 08540
 (609) 452-0606
 (800) 221-4792

Key Agencies for Technology

Key agencies for technology discussed in this section are the Alliance for Technology Access Resource Centers, the California Technology Assistance Project, and the Community College High Tech centers for the Disabled.

Alliance for Technology Access Resource Centers. Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) Resource Centers provide technical support, instruction, demonstrations, and hands-on opportunities for students, parents, and educators wishing to learn more about adaptive computers.

To learn more about ATA membership and services contact:

Alliance for Technology Access
 2173 E. Francisco Blvd., Suite L
 San Rafael, CA 94901
 (415) 455-4575
 FAX: (415) 455-0654

The California Technology Assistance Project. To find information concerning education technology in California, technology grants, the Internet, and the World Wide Web and to locate the nearest education technology consortia coordinator, contact the California Department of Education, Education Technology Office, (916) 657-5414, or your county office of education.

Community College High Tech Centers for the Disabled. The network of Community College High Tech Centers in California provides instruction, technical support, and access to adaptive computer technologies to blind and partially sighted students making the transition into higher education and the workplace. For general information about programs and services, contact:

HI-TECH Center for the Disabled
 21050 McClellan Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014
 (408) 996-4636

American Printing House for the Blind Federal Quota Program

Each year Congress appropriates a specific sum of money to the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) to be used for developing and supplying books in special media as well as for providing specialized aids and equipment for educating the nation's blind students. In turn, APH allots a credit to each state department of education on the basis of the number of blind students in that state. States may acquire materials and equipment from APH without cost up to the amounts of their federal quota.

In California the APH Federal Quota Program is administered by the Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology (CSMT), a unit of the California Department of Education. During January of each year, CSMT conducts an annual registration of blind students in California to establish the state's proportional credit allotment with APH. As is the policy in many other states, the allotment for California from the annual federal quota appropriation is apportioned to school districts, county education offices, state hospitals, and private schools on the basis of the number of legally blind students registered in the educational programs of these facilities.

To acquire materials on APH Federal Quota accounts, schools in California must send their orders on forms provided for this purpose to the CSMT, where the order is approved. Items not filled by the CSMT are forwarded to APH via the CARL ET AL computer system. After receiving orders approved by CSMT, APH will ship materials directly to the school unless otherwise instructed.

All items provided to schools in California through the Federal Quota Program, state funds, or other federal funds are by law property of the state and are subject to recall and redistribution by CSMT in accordance with the changing needs of blind students in the state.

Legal Requirements

(As of January, 1997)

This appendix contains pertinent sections from the *California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Education* and the *Education Code* that apply to the content of this publication. These legal requirements were current as of January, 1997. The purpose of this appendix is to give readers an opportunity to review legislative provisions for which citations appear throughout this publication.

California Special Education Programs: A Composite of Laws contains all laws in the *California Education Code*, *California Code of Regulations, Health and Safety Code*, *Government Code*, and the *Welfare and Institutions Code*, as well as noncodified sections, having a direct impact on special education and related services for individuals with exceptional needs. Prepared by the Special Education Division, California Department of Education, this publication is available at no charge for limited quantities from the Sales Unit, Bureau of Publications, California Department of Education. (See “Publishing Information” on page ii for information on ordering departmental publications.)

Eligibility Criteria for the Visually Impaired

California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Education, Section 3030

(d) A pupil has a visual impairment which, even with correction, adversely affects a pupil’s educational performance.

Vision Services

California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Education, Section 3051.7

(a) Vision services shall be provided by a credentialed teacher of the visually handicapped and may include:

(1) Adaptations in curriculum, media, and the environment, as well as instruction in special skills.

(2) Consultative services to pupils, parents, teachers, and other school personnel.

(b) An assessment of and provision for services to visually impaired pupils may be conducted by an eye specialist who has training and expertise in low vision disabilities and has available the appropriate low vision aids for the purposes of assessment. The eye specialist

may provide consultation to the pupil, parents, teacher and other school personnel as may be requested by the individualized education program team.

(c) Procedures which may be utilized by qualified personnel are those procedures authorized by federal and state laws and regulations and performed in accordance with these laws and regulations and standards of the profession.

(d) For the purposes of this section, an eye specialist shall mean a licensed optometrist, ophthalmologist, or other licensed physician and surgeon who has training and expertise in low vision disabilities.

Low Incidence Disabilities Definitions

Education Code Section 5600.5

(a) The Legislature finds and declares that:

(1) Pupils with low incidence disabilities, as a group, make up less than 1 percent of the total statewide enrollment for kindergarten through grade 12.

(2) Pupils with low incidence disabilities require highly specialized services, equipment, and materials.

Education Code Section 56026.5

“Low incidence disability” means a severe disabling condition with an expected incidence rate of less than one percent of the total statewide enrollment in kindergarten through grade 12. For purposes of this definition, severe handicapping conditions are hearing impairments, vision impairments, and severe orthopedic impairments, or any combination thereof. For purposes of this definition, vision impairments do not include disabilities within the function of vision specified in Section 56338.

Qualified Staff

Education Code Section 56001

It is the intent of the Legislature that special education programs provide all of the following:

(n) Appropriate qualified staff are employed, consistent with credentialing requirements, to fulfill the responsibilities of the local plan and positive efforts are made to employ qualified disabled individuals.

Special Education Program Options

Education Code Section 56031

... Special education provides a full continuum of program options to meet the educational and service needs of individuals with exceptional needs in the least restrictive environment.

Guidelines, Technical Assistance, and Monitoring

Education Code Section 56136

The superintendent shall develop guidelines for each low incidence disability area and provide technical assistance to parents, teachers, and administrators regarding the implementation of the guidelines. The guidelines shall clarify the identification, assessment, and planning of, and the provision of, specialized services to pupils with low incidence disabilities. The superintendent shall consider the guidelines when monitoring programs serving pupils with low incidence disabilities pursuant to Section 56825. The adopted guidelines shall be promulgated for the purpose of establishing recommended guidelines and shall not operate to impose minimum state requirements.

Directories of Public and Private Agencies

Education Code Section 56137

The superintendent shall develop, update every other year, and disseminate directories of public and private agencies providing services to pupils with low incidence disabilities. The directories shall be made available as reference directories to parents, teachers, and administrators. The directories shall include, but need not be limited to, the following information:

(a) A description of each agency providing services and program options within each disability area.

(b) The specialized services and program options provided, including infant and preschool programs.

(c) The number of credentialed and certificated staff providing specialized services.

(d) The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of agency administrators or other individuals responsible for the programs.

Compliance Assurances/Description and Services

Education Code Section 56200

Each local plan submitted to the superintendent under this part shall contain all the following:

(a) Compliance assurances, including general compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), and this part.

(b) A description of services to be provided by each district and county office. This description shall demonstrate that all individuals with exceptional needs shall have access to services and instruction appropriate to meet their needs as specified in their individualized education programs.

Local Plan Agreements

Education Code Section 56220

In addition to the provisions required to be included in the local plan pursuant to Section 56200, each special education local plan area that submits a local plan pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 56170 and each county office that submits a local plan pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 56170 shall develop written agreements to be entered into by entities participating in the plan. The agreements need not be submitted to the superintendent. These agreements shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) A coordinated identification, referral, and placement system pursuant to Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 56300).

(b) Procedural safeguards pursuant to Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 56500).

(c) Regionalized services to local programs, including, but not limited to, all the following:

(1) Program specialist service pursuant to Section 56368.

(2) Personnel development, including training for staff, parents, and members of the community advisory committee pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 56240).

(3) Evaluation pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 56600).

(4) Data collection and development of management information systems.

(5) Curriculum development.

(6) Provision for ongoing review of programs conducted, and procedures utilized, under the local plan, and a mechanism for correcting any identified problem.

(d) A description of the process for coordinating services with other local public agencies that are funded to serve individuals with exceptional needs.

(e) A description of the process for coordinating and providing services to individuals with exceptional needs placed in public hospitals, proprietary hospitals, and other residential medical facilities pursuant to Article 5.5 (commencing with Section 56167) of Chapter 2.

(f) A description of the process for coordinating and providing services to individuals with exceptional needs placed in licensed children's institutions and foster family homes pursuant to Article 5 (commencing with Section 56155) of Chapter 2.

(g) A description of the process for coordinating and providing services to individuals with exceptional needs

placed in juvenile court schools or county community schools pursuant to Section 56150.

Education Code Section 56221

(a) Each entity providing special education under this part shall adopt policies for the programs and services it operates, consistent with agreements adopted pursuant to subdivision (b) or (c) of Section 56170, or Section 56220. The policies need not be submitted to the superintendent.

(b) Such policies shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(5) Transportation, where appropriate, which describes how special education transportation is coordinated with regular home-to-school transportation. The policy shall set forth criteria for meeting the transportation needs of special education pupils.

Staff Development

Education Code Section 56240

Staff development programs shall be provided for regular and special education teachers, administrators, certificated and classified employees, volunteers, community advisory committee members and, as appropriate, members of the district and county governing boards. The programs shall be coordinated with other staff development programs in the district, special education local plan area, or county office, including school level staff development programs authorized by state and federal law.

Identification and Referral

Education Code Section 56300

Each district, special education local plan area, or county office shall actively and systematically seek out all individuals with exceptional needs, ages 0 through 21 years, including children not enrolled in public school programs, who reside in the district or are under the jurisdiction of a special education local plan area or a county office.

Education Code Section 56301

Each district, special education local plan area, or county office shall establish written policies and procedures for a continuous child-find system which addresses the relationships among identification, screening, referral, assessment, planning, implementation, review, and the triennial assessment. The policies and procedures shall include, but need not be limited to, written

notification of all parents of their rights under this chapter, and the procedure for initiating a referral for assessment to identify individuals with exceptional needs.

Education Code Section 56302

Each district, special education local plan area, or county office shall provide for the identification and assessment of an individual's exceptional needs, and the planning of an instructional program to best meet the assessed needs. Identification procedures shall include systematic methods of utilizing referrals of pupils from teachers, parents, agencies, appropriate professional persons, and from other members of the public. Identification procedures shall be coordinated with school site procedures for referral of pupils with needs that cannot be met with modification of the regular instructional program.

Education Code Section 56303

A pupil shall be referred for special educational instruction and services only after the resources of the regular education program have been considered and, where appropriate, utilized.

Assessment/Low Vision Assessment

Education Code Section 56320

(f) The pupil is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, where appropriate, health and development, vision, including low vision, hearing, motor abilities, language function, general ability, academic performance, self-help, orientation and mobility skills, career and vocational abilities and interests, and social and emotional status. A developmental history is obtained, when appropriate. For pupils with residual vision, a low vision assessment shall be provided in accordance with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.

Persons Conducting the Assessment

Education Code Section 56320

(g) The assessment of a pupil, including the assessment of a pupil with a suspected low incidence disability, shall be conducted by persons knowledgeable of that disability. Special attention shall be given to the unique educational needs, including, but not limited to, skills and the need for specialized services, materials, and equipment consistent with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.

Assessment Report

Education Code Section 56327

The personnel who assess the pupil shall prepare a written report, or reports, as appropriate, of the results of each assessment. The report shall include, but not be limited to, all the following:

(h) The need for specialized services, materials, and equipment for pupils with low incidence disabilities consistent with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.

Visual Perceptual/Visual Motor Dysfunction

Education Code Section 56338

As used in Section 56337, "specific learning disability" includes, but is not limited to, disability within the function of vision which results in visual perceptual or visual motor dysfunction.

Individualized Education Program

Education Code Section 56345

(b) When appropriate, the individualized education program shall also include, but not be limited to, . . . :

(7) For pupils with low incidence disabilities, specialized services, materials, and equipment, consistent with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.

Appropriate Reading Media or Medium, Including Braille

Noncodified Section, AB 2445 (Conroy), Chapter 998, Statutes of 1994

The Legislature hereby finds and declares the following:

(a) Functionally blind pupils and some pupils with other severe visual impairments who have the ability to read require instruction in braille if they are to maximize their academic potential and have the greatest chances for success throughout their lives. There are pupils in California who are visually impaired for whom braille is the appropriate reading method but who are not receiving instruction in braille. In the development of the individualized education programs for pupils who are visually impaired, there is a presumption that proficiency in braille reading and writing is essential for the pupils' satisfactory education progress and independent functioning.

(b) The most appropriate reading medium or media for an individual pupil is that which is most efficient in terms of comprehension, speed, and stamina, commensurate with the pupil's ability and grade level. It is not the

intention of the Legislature to require the exclusive use of braille if other educational media are appropriate for the pupil's educational needs. It is the intent of the Legislature, however, that all pupils who are visually impaired be given the opportunity to be assessed to determine the appropriate reading medium or media of each pupil.

Definitions

Education Code Section 56350

Unless the context otherwise requires, the definitions set forth in this section shall govern the construction of this article.

(a) A "functionally blind pupil" means a pupil who relies basically on senses other than vision as major channels for learning.

(b) A "pupil with low vision" means a pupil who uses vision as a channel for learning, but who may also benefit from instruction in braille.

(c) A "visually impaired pupil" means a pupil who is functionally blind or a pupil with low vision. For purposes of this article, a "visually impaired pupil" does not include a pupil who is eligible for special education and related services based on a specific learning disability identified pursuant to Section 56338.

(d) "Braille" means the system of reading and writing through touch commonly known as "Standard English Braille, American Edition."

Education Code Section 44265.5(a)

Pupils who are visually impaired, as defined in Section 56350, shall be taught by teachers whose professional preparation and credential authorization are specific to that disabling condition.

Braille Instruction

Education Code Section 56351

School districts, special education local plan areas, or county offices of education shall provide opportunities for braille instruction for pupils who, due to a prognosis of visual deterioration, may be expected to have a need for braille as a reading medium.

Determining the Appropriate Reading Medium or Media

Education Code Section 56352

(a) A functional vision assessment conducted pursuant to Section 56320 shall be used as one criterion in determining the appropriate reading medium or media for the pupil.

(b) An assessment of braille skills shall be required for functionally blind pupils who have the ability to read in accordance with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.

(c) Braille instruction shall be provided by a teacher credentialed to teach pupils who are visually impaired.

(d) The determination, by a pupil's individualized education program team, of the most appropriate medium or media, including braille, for visually impaired pupils shall be in accordance with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.

(e) Each visually impaired pupil shall be provided with the opportunity to receive an assessment to determine the appropriate reading medium or media, including braille instruction, if appropriate, for that pupil.

Education Code Section 56360

Each district, special education local plan area, or county office shall ensure that a continuum of program options is available to meet the needs of individuals with exceptional needs for special education and related services.

Designated Instruction and Services

Education Code Section 56363

(a) Designated instruction and services as specified in the individualized education program shall be available when the instruction and services are necessary for the pupil to benefit educationally from his or her instructional program. The instruction and services shall be provided by the regular class teacher, the special class teacher, or the resource specialist if the teacher or specialist is competent to provide such instruction and services and if the provision of such instruction and services by the teacher or specialist is feasible. If not, the appropriate designated instruction and services specialist shall provide such instruction and services. Designated instruction and services shall meet standards adopted by the board.

(b) These services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Language and speech development and remediation.
- (2) Audiological services.
- (3) Orientation and mobility instruction.
- (4) Instruction in the home or hospital.
- (5) Adapted physical education.
- (6) Physical and occupational therapy.
- (7) Vision services.
- (8) Specialized driver training instruction.

- (9) Counseling and guidance.
- (10) Psychological services other than assessment and development of the individualized education program.
- (11) Parent counseling and training.
- (12) Health and nursing services.
- (13) Social worker services.
- (14) Specially designed vocational education and career development.
- (15) Recreation services.
- (16) Specialized services for low incidence disabilities, such as readers, transcribers, and vision and hearing services.

Integrated Special Classes/Instruction

Education Code Section 56364.1

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 56364, pupils with low incidence disabilities may receive all or a portion of their instruction in the regular classroom and may also be enrolled in special classes taught by appropriately credentialed teachers who serve these pupils at one or more school sites. The instruction shall be provided in a manner which is consistent with the guidelines adopted pursuant to Section 56136 and in accordance with the individualized education program.

Funding Specialized Books, Materials, and Equipment

Education Code Section 56739

(a) When allocating funds received for special education pursuant to this article, it is the intent of the Legislature that, to the extent funding is available, school districts and county offices shall give first priority to expenditures to provide specialized books, materials, and equipment which are necessary and appropriate for the individualized education programs of pupils with low incidence disabilities, up to a maximum of five hundred dollars (\$500) per pupil with low incidence disability. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prohibit pooling the prioritized funds to purchase equipment to be shared by several pupils.

(b) Equipment purchased pursuant to this section shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, nonprescriptive equipment, sensory aids, and other equipment and materials as appropriate.

Low Incidence Funding

Education Code Section 56771

(a) Commencing with the 1985-86 fiscal year, and for each fiscal year thereafter, funds to support specialized

books, materials, and equipment as required under the individualized education program for each pupil with low incidence disabilities, as defined in Section 56026.5, shall be determined by dividing the total number of pupils with low incidence disabilities in the state, as reported on December 1 of the prior fiscal year, into the annual appropriation provided for this purpose in the Budget Act.

(b) The per-pupil entitlement determined pursuant to subdivision (a) shall be multiplied by the number of pupils with low incidence disabilities in each special education local plan area to determine the total funds available for each local plan.

(c) The superintendent shall apportion the amount determined pursuant to subdivision (b) to the responsible local agency in the special education local plan area for purposes of purchasing and coordinating the use of specialized books, materials, and equipment.

(d) As a condition of receiving these funds, the responsible local agency shall ensure that the appropriate books, materials, and equipment are purchased, that the use of the equipment is coordinated as necessary, and that the books, materials, and equipment are reassigned to local educational agencies within the special education local plan area once the agency that originally received the books, materials, and equipment no longer needs them.

(e) It is the intent of the Legislature that special education local plan areas share unused specialized books, materials, and equipment with neighboring special education local plan areas.

Special Supplies and Equipment

Education Code Section 56822

Sound recordings, large print, braille, and other specialized technology, media, or materials purchased, instructional materials transcribed from regular print into special media, and special supplies and equipment purchased for individuals with exceptional needs for which state or federal funds were allowed are property of the state and shall be available for use by individuals with exceptional needs throughout the state as the board shall provide.

Resources for Technical Assistance

This list of resources shows where information about specific areas may be obtained. Resources for technical assistance are available from the California Department of Education, other state agencies, and various state and national organizations.

California Department of Education

For information about identification, assessment, instruction and services, curriculum, public school programs and private schools and agencies, directories (including the low incidence directory), funding (including low incidence funding), and legal requirements, and monitoring, one should contact:¹

Special Education Division
515 L Street, Suite 270
Sacramento, California
(916) 445-4613
FAX: (916) 327-3516
TDD: (916) 327-3718 or 327-3678

Information about the educational and residential program, the assessment center, and assistance in assessing and providing specialized instruction to students with visual impairments (particularly students with additional disabilities) may be obtained from:

California School for the Blind
500 Walnut Ave.
Fremont, CA 94536
(510) 794-3800

Materials and equipment, aural media, and transcribers, as well as information about them, are available from:

(Send materials in packages to this address):

Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology
560 J Street, Rm. 390
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-5103

¹To use the Internet to access the low incidence directory, which includes a resource directory data base of nonprofit agencies, organizations, and individuals and a public school directory of programs, please use the web page for the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education:

<http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed>

Additional program support and assistance are also provided by many other units within the following main branches of the California Department of Education. The main mailing address is California Department of Education, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720.

Specialized Programs Branch
(916) 657-2642
Curriculum and Instructional Leadership Branch
(916) 657-3047
Child, Youth, and Family Services Branch
(916) 657-5232

Additional Resources

The following agency provides assistance in a variety of settings to parents, staff, and administrators of programs serving students who are deaf-blind and maintains a registry of these students in California:

South Office:

California Deaf-Blind Services
238821 Landisview Avenue, Suite P4
El Toro, CA 92630
(714) 837-8551

North Office:

California Deaf-Blind Services
604 Font Boulevard
San Francisco, CA 94132
(415) 239-8099

For information about eye specialists, one should contact:

California Optometric Association
921 11th St.
Sacramento, CA 95812
(916) 441-3990

California Association of Ophthalmology
2655 Van Ness Ave., Suite 216
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 775-5259

The following organization sponsors an annual state conference and provides information about transcription in special media and publications, including a newsletter for transcribers and educators:

California Transcribers and Educators of the Visually Handicapped
741 N. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 666-2211

The address of the main office of the California State Department of Rehabilitation is:

Department of Rehabilitation
830 K Street Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 323-4345

District offices are located throughout the state.

Information about state hospital programs in California is available from:

Department of Developmental Services
1600 Ninth St., Second Floor South
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 323-4848

Information about preparation programs for teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, and credentials may be obtained from:

Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1020 "O" St., Rm 222
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-7254

California State University, Los Angeles
Special Education Division
5151 State University Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90032
(213) 343-4400

San Francisco State University
Department of Special Education
1600 Holloway Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94132
(415) 338-1080 or 338-1245

The following is the only membership organization dedicated to the education and rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired children and adults. The organization and chapters conduct local, regional, and international meetings and conferences; provide publications, including newsletters and journals; and offer a job exchange service. The address is as follows:

Association of Education and Rehabilitation
of the Blind and Visually Impaired (National Office)
206 N. Washington St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 548-1884; (703) 836-6060

The following professional organizations of orientation and mobility specialists hold state and local meetings, publish newsletters, and provide information in this field. The addresses in California for this organization are:

California Association of Orientation and Mobility
Specialists
Northern California Chapter
San Francisco State University
Department of Special Education
1600 Holloway Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94132
(415) 338-1245

California Association of Orientation and Mobility
Specialists
Southern California Chapter
California State University, Los Angeles
Department of Special Education
5151 State University Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90032
(213) 343-4411

The organization listed as follows provides catalogs of publications and media. The services of national and regional consultants and publications, including the *Directory of Agencies Serving the Visually Handicapped in the U.S.*, are available from this organization:

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300
New York, NY 10001
(212) 502-7634 or 7640

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
Western Regional Office
111 Pine St., Suite 725
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 392-4845

The following organization publishes newsletters and position papers and hosts national meetings:

Division for Visually Handicapped
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Dr.
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 620-3660

The organization listed as follows provides information, referral services, and public education:

Joint Action Committee of Organizations of
and for the Visually Impaired
10919 San Leon Avenue
Fountain Valley, CA 92708
(714) 968-2259

The following organization serves in an advisory capacity to public and private agencies regarding issues relating to students with low incidence disabilities:

Low Incidence Disability Advisory Committee
c/o Low Incidence Programs
1775 Chatsworth Blvd., Rm 249
San Diego, CA 92107
(619) 225-3776

The following organization supports sight conservation and work for the blind:

Lions International
300 22nd St.
Oak Brook, IL 60521

The organization listed below provides peer support, information, and services to parents of visually impaired and multiply impaired/visually impaired students.

National Association for Parents of the Visually
Impaired, Inc.
P.O. Box 317
Watertown, MA 02272-0317
(800) 562-6265

The address of the California chapter is:

California Association for Parents of the Visually
Impaired
P.O. Box 1126
Los Gatos, CA 95031
(909) 945-5619

Organizations of the blind that can provide assistance to staff and parents are:

California Council of the Blind
3919 W. Magnolia Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 557-6372
(800) 221-6359

National Federation of the Blind of California
3934 Kern Court
Pleasanton, CA 94588
(510) 846-6086

The following organization is a source for a network of services to infants and preschool children provided by agencies in southern California:

Southern California Network
Serving Infant and Preschool
Children with Visual Impairments
P.O. Box 1305
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

For resources related to materials and equipment, see Appendix E.

The Early Start Program

In 1975 national legislation, Public Law (PL) 94-142, was passed to guarantee special education programs to all school-aged children with disabilities. This legislation enabled approximately 550,000 California children with disabilities to gain access to public education during 1993-94. Since then the value of providing educational services to children disabled from birth has been recognized. When early intervention is provided to children and their families, it lessens the effects of a disability. Stress on children and their families is reduced, allowing both to function more productively and independently.

In the light of this information, PL 99-457 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed to amend PL 94-142. This amendment guaranteed special education services through two distinct programs: one for children aged three through five, the Preschool Program, and the other for children from birth through two years of age, the Early Start Program. The Preschool Program is administered in California by the California Department of Education.

In October, 1993, SB 1085 was signed, implementing Part H of IDEA in California. As a result, the Early Start Program in California became a reality. The Department of Developmental Services was the lead agency appointed by the Governor, and the Department of Education became a collaborating agency along with the departments of Health Services (which include California Children Services [CCS], California Health and Disability Prevention [CHDP], and public health), Social Services, Mental Health, and Alcohol and Drug Programs, as well as hospitals, physicians, community-based service providers, parents, and caregivers.

The California Early Start Program reflects the focus and intent of the Part H legislation and has a positive impact on early intervention services in California through:

- Continued support for existing services and expansion of some programs
- Enhanced services for infants and toddlers with low incidence conditions, which include visual, hearing, and orthopedic impairments and combinations thereof

- Commitment to family-focused service delivery systems, including support for local family resource centers/networks (FRC/Ns)
- Interagency collaboration to promote local inter-agency agreements, memoranda of understanding, and the coordinated development of services in the participating agencies

While the Department of Developmental Services through the regional centers and the Department of Education through LEAs coordinate and provide most early intervention services at the local level, the departments of Health Services, Mental Health, Social Services, and Alcohol and Drug Programs assist in providing services that are not required by Part H but that may benefit families of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

The success of the California Early Start Program depends on interagency collaboration, parent involvement, and a broad base of community support to establish and maintain an effective early intervention system in California.

Early Start Intervention Services

All children need love, patience, and special attention. Some need more than others, and some have special needs.

Early Start is designed specifically for infants and toddlers, birth through two years of age, who have disabilities and who are at risk for disability; and their families are included as well.

For infants born with problems that may interfere with normal development or for those born with identifiable disabilities, early intervention measures can be immediately taken to prevent, ameliorate, or compensate for the effects of risk factors or disabling conditions.

Early Start services are specialized and provide ongoing support, which includes educational, health, developmental, and social interventions that influence the overall development of the disabled child.

Early Start involves multidisciplinary coordination of specialties, such as physical/occupational therapy, nutritional, speech, medical, educational, and psychosocial intervention. This multidisciplinary approach reduces duplication of services and ensures the provision and coordination of needed services.

A key to the development of a child is the nature of the child's relationship to the parent or to other primary caregivers. Parents have an active role in early intervention by working directly with the special care professionals. Parents gain confidence in their skills and in those of

their child. The child in turn acquires the self-confidence vital to mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

Individualized Family Service Plans

The purpose of the individualized family service plan (IFSP) is to provide a process that enables the family and service provider(s) to work together as equal partners in determining the early intervention services that are required for the child with disabilities and the family. Both formal and informal resources and services are to be considered. The IFSP is *one* component of a comprehensive system of early intervention services.

The Role of the IFSP

The most important part of the IFSP is not the written product that is developed but rather the relationship that is built between the family and the professionals and paraprofessionals from the early intervention community. This relationship must be based on trust and respect. The goal is to enable and empower the family members to be active decision makers on behalf of the child and family. The family members should gain in self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of participating in developing their child's IFSP.

The IFSP is a process, not a form to be filled out, signed, and filed. It is, in a sense, a periodic rest stop along the way, where the family and other team members reflect on what has been learned and gain, thus far, a plan for the next part of the journey.

Basic Elements of Part H of IDEA and California's Early Start Program

Listed as follows are 14 basic elements of Part H of IDEA and California's Early Start Program:

1. A definition of developmental delay
2. A timetable for availability of services
3. A comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation of children and families
4. An individualized family service plan that includes coordination of services
5. A comprehensive child-find and referral system
6. A public awareness program to focus on early identification of developmentally delayed children
7. A central directory of services, resources, state experts, and research and demonstration projects
8. A comprehensive system of personnel development
9. A single line of authority to a lead agency
10. A policy for contracting or making arrangements with local service providers
11. Steps for timely reimbursements of funds

12. Procedural safeguards
13. Policies and procedures for personnel standards
14. A system of compiling data regarding the early intervention program

Part H of IDEA, which applies to infants from birth through two years old, differs from Part B, which applies to individuals from three to twenty-two years old.

Assessment

Part H requires an assessment in *all* five areas of development: cognitive; communication; adaptive; social and emotional; and physical, which includes vision, hearing, and health status.

Eligibility

Under California government code visually impaired children may be eligible for services from LEAs if they meet the requirements in the *California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Education*, sections 3030 and 3031, but they are required to have a solely low incidence disability and not be eligible for services from the regional center. Visually impaired infants and toddlers must be identified as disabled under Section 3030(a) and as an established risk for disability. Infants and toddlers who have visual impairments are *not* required to show a 50 percent delay in one area or a 25 percent delay in two areas. Infants and toddlers with multiple disabilities, including visual impairment, may be dually eligible for and dually served by regional centers and the LEA. The number of dually eligible infants and toddlers receiving services from the LEA is determined by the LEA's funded capacity.

Determination of eligibility is established through evaluation, and programmatic needs are determined through assessment in all the five areas and will include an assessment of the family's concerns, resources, and priorities. (See Appendix F, "Legal Requirements.")

Review of the Individualized Family Service Plan

Part H also requires that every child's individualized family service plan (IFSP) be reviewed every six months and annually and that steps for a transition be written in the IFSP when the child is two years and six months of age. The preschool staff needs to be involved in the transition planning to ensure a smooth transition and no

gap in service when the child turns three.

For children who may be eligible for services from regional centers as well as from LEAs, an interagency team must participate in decisions about the early intervention services for infants, toddlers, and their families.

Infants and toddlers who are not dually eligible and are enrolled in LEA programs are eligible for services not offered to preschoolers by the LEA, such as service coordination, respite, nutrition consultation, and transportation for families to activities that are necessary to carry out the IFSP. The IFSP must also describe services the family needs that other agencies and services may offer and for which the LEA is not responsible for payment.

Preschool Children

For preschoolers who are eligible under Part B of IDEA, the requirements for eligibility are the same as those for older children to age twenty-two. Preschoolers who are making a transition to kindergarten or to the first grade must be assessed to determine whether they continue to be eligible for special education and related services.

Special education services for preschoolers may be made available at an age-appropriate public school or at a private nonsectarian preschool, a child development center, a Head Start program, a family day care home, the child's home, or a special site that includes opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers. Adult-to-child ratios for children with severe disabilities such as a visual impairment are specified in *Education Code* Section 56441.5 not to exceed a ratio of one instructional adult to five children.

Key Points for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

Key points for addressing unique needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who have visual impairments are provided under the following areas: concept development, sensory/motor development, adaptive development, communication skills development, social/emotional development, and low vision. These points are examined in the section that follows.

Concept Development

Key points for concept development are listed as follows:

- Accommodation for perceptual, processing, auditory, and experiential needs
- Development of auditory, olfactory, tactual, and kinesthetic discrimination skills to access the environment and assist in the development of object permanence
- Time and opportunity to engage in intensive, repetitive, and concrete meaningful daily experiences with real objects and people in a familiar setting to help the infant develop experiential and mobility skills and to stimulate language generalizations and concept development

Sensory/Motor Development

Key points for sensory/motor development are listed as follows:

- Appropriate adapted technology
- Occupational therapy or physical therapy or both to overcome the effects of limited motor experiences on muscle development
- Gross motor activities to develop body awareness and self-awareness and position in space
- Independent ambulation that is confident and fluid
- Fine-motor activities to develop two-handed tactual discrimination skills that are a prerequisite for braille skills
- A safe, supervised, supportive environment in which to play that is relatively free of obstacles to provide motivation for movement
- Movement equipment and experiences
- Appropriate activities to overcome tactual defensiveness
- Ongoing medical/nursing supervision

Adaptive Development

Adaptive development involves daily living skills and orientation and mobility skills. Key points for adaptive development are listed as follows:

- Early exposure, by using clear auditory directions and practice, to age-appropriate skills for daily living that the child will not learn by visual imitation; for example, eating, dressing, and toileting
- Access to orientation and mobility techniques and instruction to develop mapping skills and knowledge of landmarks and to encourage independent movement (These might include the use of push toys and marshmallow-tip canes.)
- A stable, tactually interesting, and safe environment in which toys and household surroundings are organized

- Adapted toys and equipment, such as noisy or talking toys, to assist the infant in acquiring information and developing other sensory modalities

Communication Skills Development

Key points for communication skills development are listed as follows:

- Auditory training to assist in localization of sounds and in listening skills
- Opportunities to develop normal speech mechanism using suck, swallow, and chew activities
- Access to age-appropriate models to assist in developing appropriate speech patterns
- Facilitation of parent-child relationships through the use of nonvisual communication
- Recognition of the unique responses of infants with visual impairments to the introduction of new voices and sounds (Some infants will quiet and lower their heads, a reaction that some interpret to be a lack of awareness of new stimuli.)
- Simultaneous verbal descriptions of activities in which the infant is actively engaged
- Identification of persons who interact with the infant through the use of tactual or verbal cueing
- Access to audiological assessments

Social/Emotional Development

Key points for social/emotional development are listed as follows:

- Early nurturing interactions with a consistent, significant caregiver
- Facilitation of parent-child interaction, such as reading the child's body language or using gestures and facial cues (Some infants become quiet and still even when approached by a familiar person, a reaction that may be interpreted as a lack of interest and may discourage future social contact.)
- Access to nondisabled, age-appropriate peers to help children develop interpersonal relationships through play
- Behavioral limits that are fair and that the child can understand
- Access to parenting supports for families, including techniques in raising a child with visual impairments; for example, managing impulsivity, guiding attention to task, and supporting advanced or improving delayed mobility skills and language
- Expectations of parents and caregivers for development of age-appropriate social behavior

- Information, training, and support for families to motivate the infant to interact with family members and others within the extended family and community

Low Vision

Key points to consider for infants and toddlers with low vision are listed as follows:

- Magnification, such as glasses, contact lenses, and sunglasses
- Frequent appropriate functional vision assessment
- Vision stimulation activities in the context of naturally occurring events to encourage the use of residual vision
- For infants and toddlers with low vision, use of light boxes, materials in contrasting colors and textures, sounds, objects, experiences, and smells